



Connecticut  
Early Childhood  
Alliance

**Testimony of Merrill Gay**  
**Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance**  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
April 21, 2014

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 6825. My name is Merrill Gay, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth through age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security. You have already heard from many of our members about their opposition to the cuts made in this bill when they testified on the budget proposed for next year. Those problematic cuts include: Community Plans for Early Childhood, Even Start, Head Start Early Childhood Link, Parent Leadership Training in the Children's Trust Fund, and Quality Enhancement.

**What is new in the rescission package since the Governor proposed his budget is a \$5.8 million cut to the Care4Kids childcare subsidy program.**

A family in Connecticut with two children, a preschooler and a toddler can easily face a childcare bill in excess of what they pay in rent or a mortgage. Connecticut used to provide a childcare subsidy for families earning up to 75% of the state median. In one of our previous budget crises we closed Priority Group 6 (families between 50% and 75% of State Median Income (SMI)) to new applicants. However, for years if you were on Care4Kids and your income went up over 50% of SMI, your child was rolled over into Priority Group 6 and could stay on the program as long as your income didn't go above 75% of SMI. Several years ago, to close yet another budget hole you closed Priority Group 6 for these cases as well.

Since then, we have advocated to reopen it so that families doing what we want them to do, becoming self sufficient, don't face a benefit cliff when they start earning just a little bit more. Every time we make this case, we hear, "But we don't have the money, if we allow families to stay on after they get above 50% of the state median, we won't have the money to serve the very poor." That is obviously a compelling argument, but it's not true this year.

By October it was clear that Care4Kids was not serving as many children as it did last year and there was money in that line item that wouldn't be spent. So rather than protect the 50 to 60 families a month that typically exceed the 50% of SMI limit, you are being asked to cut those funds. I urge you instead to explicitly allow the reopening of Priority Group 6 for rollovers only within existing appropriations.

Fifty to sixty families a month losing their childcare subsidy isn't that many people, but if you are one of those families losing your childcare is a crisis. Parents turn down promotions because the small raise will push them over the limit. Yesterday I spoke with a mother of two who got married in November. She was very happy until she discovered that with her husband's income they were now \$1,000 over the \$52,107 limit for Care for Kids. She left me with the question, "How are we going to pay the \$4,000 that it is going to cost us for care this summer while we're at work and the kids are out of school?"